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ART. XX. *An Account of the Religious Opinions and Observances of the Khonds of Goomsur and Boad.* By CAPTAIN SAMUEL CHARTERS MACPHERSON, of the Madras Army.

(Read November 20, 1841.)

[*Note.* SEVERAL years ago, at the close of the military operations of the Madras Government in Goomsur, Captain (then Lieutenant) Macpherson executed by order of government a survey of the country, and in that service lost his health. From the Cape of Good Hope, whither he had gone for its recovery, he transmitted his notes on the religion of the Khonds to a relative in this country, who considered them to possess so much novelty and general interest, that he presented them to the Society, upon his own responsibility, and without the sanction of the writer: and a few additions having been since made, the paper is now laid before the public.]

INTRODUCTION.

Of the Relations of the Khond Population of the Zemindaries of Goomsur and Boad to the Hindu People.

Natural and political divisions of Orissa. Maritime division. Subalpine division. Alpine division. Three principal primitive races, the Koles, Khonds, and Sourahs. Region of the Khond race. Region of the Sourah race. These observations relate chiefly to the Khonds of the Zemindaries of Boad and Goomsur.

The light of authentic history dawns upon the ancient kingdom of Orissa, at the period of the accession of the Kesari dynasty to its throne A.D. 473, and in the ninth century plainly discloses its great social features, which then bore the same analogy to its geographical divisions which they still bear.

The territory of Orissa, when the power of the Gajapati sovereigns was at its zenith¹, occupied a space measuring six degrees in latitude, between the valley of the Ganges and that of the Godavery, and having a mean breadth of about three degrees in longitude. This space is traversed in its whole length by the range

¹ Stirling's Cuttack, Asiat. Trans., vol. xvi.

of Eastern Ghauts, running at an average distance of seventy miles from the coast of Coromandel, and is naturally divided, by no strong lines of demarcation, into an Alpine, a Subalpine, and a Maritime region.

I. Its Maritime division extends along the whole sea-board, with an average breadth of fifteen miles. It is an open, salubrious, and highly productive expanse, with the exception of a tract of marshy and forest-covered deltas intersected by lagunes, which is situated in its northern portion. The open and fertile parts of this territory formed, in accordance with the general usage of India, the *Khálsah* or state-domain; whilst the wilder and less accessible districts were partitioned into a number of *Zemindaries* of various rank, value, and extent.

II. The Subalpine region comprehends the subordinate ramifications, and the dependent hill groups of the great mountain chain upon either side, with the extensive tracts of country which they embrace. It comprised above one half of the entire area of the kingdom, forming a vast ill-explored range of hilly wastes, impenetrable forests, and swampy wood-lands, interspersed with many beautiful and fertile valleys, and broken occasionally by broad and productive plains.

This region was divided into a large number of *Zemindaries*, some of which, bearing the rank of petty principalities, have made a considerable figure in the history of the eastern division of the peninsula of India.

The subject of the relation of these great estates to the Orissan monarchy, and to the empires in which they have been included since its fall, has been obscured rather than illustrated by the application to it of the terms and analogies of feudalism, by writers who have regarded the external features of the Orissan system, rather than its origin, its principles, and its spirit.

These *Zemindary* domains vary in point of extent from considerable estates of small value to territories of great dimensions yielding large revenues. The more important are possessed by families which derive their origin from the royal houses of Orissa, or from the principal stocks of Rajputana, or which have sprung from successful adventurers, generally of two classes,—the leaders of predatory bands, and great provincial officers in whose hands administrative have passed into proprietary rights.

But the greater *Zemindars* of Orissa as a body do not owe their territories, like the original nobility of feudal Europe, to the direct patronage of a sovereign, nor their authority to the social wants of

a particular age. Their possessions were generally acquired by the enterprise, or by the policy of the founders of each house; either conquered from earlier Hindu proprietors, or wrested from the primitive occupants of the soil, or severed by fraud and force from the state. But all have acknowledged the theoretical supremacy, in succession, of the Orissan monarchy, of that of Delhi, of the Mahratta power, and of our empire; accepting from each in its turn deeds of tenure, either original or renewed, which bear every date within a period of twelve centuries, and exhibit conditions endlessly varied.

The precarious and unfruitful allegiance which they have yielded to these powers has been signified by the payment of tribute, which under our rule is in some quarters nominal, in some heavy; by the performance of services, generally formal; and the maintenance of nominal contingents.

But the chiefs of these estates have always borne the title of Raja, and have generally exercised, with few practical limitations, all the powers of independent sovereignty; reigning, the haughty and uncontrolled despots of their wild domains, save where revolts have arisen, generally from the operation of unsuitable laws and excessive assessments, and where we have bent them completely or partially to our yoke.

III. The Alpine region, comprising the central ridges, the lofty plateaux, and the inner valleys of the chain of Ghauts, with the great tracts of forest by which they are surrounded, has been occupied from the earliest historical period, chiefly by remnants of three races, which claim, with the universal support of tradition, the aboriginal possession, not of this portion alone, but of the greater part of the soil of Orissa.

Of these remnants, the Koles prevail in the northern parts, the Khonds in the middle region, and the Sourahs in the south; and whilst each of these holds exclusive possession of a part of the central tracts of mountain and forest, they exist, also, thinly scattered over portions of the Zemindary domains, under various relations to the Hindu people.

The Khonds are now seen in both these situations, within the following ill-defined limits. Upon the east they appear scattered over the wilder tracts of the Ganjam district, bordering upon the Chilka lake, touching in that quarter, at a few points, the coast of the Bay of Bengal. They are found, on the north-west, on the confines of Gondwana, in lon. 83°, while on the west they extend within the unsurveyed frontier of Berar. They are found as far

south as Bustar in lat. $19^{\circ} 40'$, while the Zemindary of Palconda is, like that of Runnapoor, possessed by a Khond chief. On the south they are replaced, in the Zemindary of Pedda Kimed, in Ganjam, by the Sourah race, which thenceforward generally occupies the eastern acclivities of the Ghauts to the Godavery. To the north, fifty miles beyond the Mahanadi, in the meridian of Boad, they are succeeded by the Kole people. On the north-east they are found high in Cuttack; while Sourahs (not identified with the Sourahs of the south) inhabit there the inferior ridges of the Ghauts.

The extreme length of the territory which is thus indicated is about 200, its extreme breadth about 170 miles; and it is unequally divided by the Mahanadi, flowing from west to east in $20^{\circ} 40'$ N. lat.

The Sourah race extends from the Kimed Zemindary and from that of Souringhi, which adjoin Goomsur upon the south, to the Godavery, a region 200 miles in length, which is almost entirely unexplored.

The present paper is intended to exhibit an outline of the religious opinions and observances of the portion of the Khond people which has fallen under my view, to the south of the Mahanadi, and principally in the Zemindaries of Boad and Goomsur,—two domains which hold a high rank amongst the great estates of Orissa, whether in respect of extent, of antiquity, or of the dignity of the families by which they have been possessed.

OF THE RELIGION OF THE KHONDS.

The difficulty, under any circumstances, of ascertaining and describing with accuracy, from oral statements, the opinions, feelings, and sentiments, which constitute a system of religion, is sufficiently apparent.

But with respect to the superstition of the Khonds it is necessary to keep distinctly in view, that their low stage of intellectual advancement presents a peculiar and additional source of error.

The leading doctrines alone of this rude system of faith are distinctly determined in the minds even of the best informed of its professors. All besides is vague, fluctuating, and uncertain. Hence in the attempt to fix in exact language a body of traditional ideas, I feel that I have unavoidably imparted to the subject a semblance of completeness, regularity, and system, which does not strictly belong to it.

I propose, 1st, to consider this superstition as it is in itself,—to state its leading ideas in immediate reference to its several divinities.

2ndly. To describe its priestly institutions.

3rdly. To notice the influence which it exerts upon society.

SECTION I.

OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE KHOND RELIGION.

Of the Fundamental Ideas of the Religion of the Khonds.

Fundamental ideas of the Khond superstition analogous to those of other races at a similar state of mental advancement. Two classes of native divinities. One Hindu divinity.

The religion of the Khonds, in its principles, its institutions, and its influences generally, resembles the systems of superstition which have been established amongst mankind, in all countries, at the same stage of intellectual progress.

Its divinities arise, 1st, from the deification of the powers which are believed to animate and to control the sensible forms of the universe, from which these powers are not discriminated by name; and 2ndly, from the adoration of the divine energy, as it is vaguely associated with abstract ideas, predominating sentiments, and local objects.

In addition to their divinities of native origin, the portion of this people to which these observations refer, has adopted, under several of her appellations, Kali, the Sakti, active energy and consort of Siva the reproducer, who is worshipped by the Hindus of the surrounding portions of Orissa.

The Khond deities may be conveniently divided into two classes, the first comprehending those which are universally acknowledged; the second, the local divinities.

In the first class are :

1. Bera Pennu, or the Earth God.
2. Bella Pennu, the Sun God, and Danzu Pennu, the Moon God.
3. Sandhi Pennu, the God of Limits.
4. Loha Pennu, the Iron God or God of Arms.
5. Jugah Pennu, the God of Small-pox.
6. Nadzu Pennu, or the village deity, the universal Genius Loci.
7. "Soro Pennu," the Hill God. †
8. "Jori Pennu," the God of Streams,

9. "Gossa Pennu," the Forest God.
10. Munda Pennu, the Tank God.
11. "Sugu Pennu" or "Sidruju Pennu," the God of Fountains.
12. Pidzu Pennu, the God of Rain.
13. Pilamu Pennu, the God of Hunting.
14. The God of Births.

In the second class are :

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. The deceased ancestors
of each tribe, or branch
of a tribe | 6. Dungarry Pennu. |
| 2. Pitabaldi. | 7. Singa Pennu. |
| 3. Bandri Pennu. | 8. Dommosinghiani. |
| 4. Bahman Pennu. | 9. Potterghor. |
| 5. Bahmundi Pennu. | 10. Pinjai. |
| | 11. Kankali. |
| | 12. Bulinda Silenda. |

There remains the Hindu Goddess Parvati, or Kali, worshipped by the Khonds under her names Bhadrawallu, Bhairavi, and Komeswari.

Of these deities in their order.

OF THE KHOND DIVINITIES GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

I. *Bera Pennu, or the Earth God, in Orissan Bhumi Devita.*

Bera Pennu, or the Earth God, worshipped under two characters. Attributes of his comprehensive character. Attributes as the divinity presiding over the powers of Nature. Institution of the rite of human sacrifice. Occasions of sacrifice. Public sacrifices. Each crop requires blood. Private sacrifices. Number of victims. The victims how procured. Acceptable victims. Must be bought. Occasionally married. Condition of the children of victims. Father and child not sacrificed in the same district. Escape of a victim. The rite lasts three days. The Meria grove and stream. The place of sacrifice.

Bera Pennu, or the Earth God, appears to be worshipped under two characters, which, however clearly distinguished in theory, are seldom separately contemplated by his trembling votaries. He is regarded first, as the Supreme Power, and secondly, as the deity who presides over the productive energies of Nature,—the two-fold aspect under which the Sun, or the regent of the solar orb, was adored in the primitive Hindu Mythology.

The attributes of the Earth God in his comprehensive character, as the supreme or greatest power, are vague, confused, and perplexed;

making up but a dim barren abstraction in the minds of men incapable of forming ideas of power not immediately derived from the sphere of their sensible experience.

In this character he appears to receive distinct worship in one case only. When a Khond tribe engages in war with enemies of another race, his awful name is invoked, and vows of sacrifice in case of success are recorded. His nature is purely malevolent, but his practical malignity towards man is generally referred to his secondary character. He does not seem to interfere with the independent actions of the other deities in their respective spheres, and he is nowhere peculiarly present.

In his secondary character, as the divinity who presides over the operations of Nature, the functions of the Earth God are defined with a considerable degree of distinctness; reflecting generally the leading wants and fears of an agricultural population. He rules the order of the seasons, and sends the periodical rains; upon him depend the fecundity of the soil, and the growth of all rural produce, the preservation of the patriarchal houses, the health and increase of the population, and in an especial manner the safety of flocks and herds and their attendants.

The following tradition contains the only revelation relative to this deity which is received by his worshippers.

"The Earth," say the Khonds, "was originally a crude and unstable mass, unfit for cultivation and for the convenient habitation of man. The Earth God said, 'Let human blood be spilt before me!' and a child was sacrificed. The soil became forthwith firm and productive; and the deity ordained that man should repeat the rite and live."

Thus, the Khond enjoys the ordinary bounty of Nature on condition of deprecating, by the ceaseless effusion of human blood, the malignity of the power by which its functions are controlled. This is the foundation, and in one point of view the sum of his religion.

The occasions and the modes of worship of the Earth God, are regulated by usages which vary in every district. I shall describe those which prevail in a considerable portion of the Mahals of Boad and Goomsur.

Contribution to the support of the ceremonial of human sacrifice, the rite which constitutes the public religion, is an indispensable condition of association in a Khond tribe; and the burden appears to be distributed without difficulty in each village, by no fixed rule, according to the means and the dispositions of individuals.

Sacrifices to the Earth God are either public or private. The

former are offered by a tribe, a branch of a tribe, or by a village ; the latter by individuals, who are generally prompted by the immediate apprehension of the wrath of the divinity.

The considerations upon which the performance of public sacrifice depends, appear to be generally these :—

I. It is thought necessary that every farm should share the blood of a human victim at the time when each of its principal crops is laid down, and particular anxiety is felt for the fulfilment of the rite in the case of the more valuable products, rice, turmeric, and mustard.

A harvest oblation is in some districts of Boad deemed scarcely less necessary than the spring sacrifice¹, and it is considered in the last degree desirable that several offerings, according to the promise of the year, should intervene betwixt them. During the hot months, when agricultural labours are nearly suspended, these offerings, which may be termed Cereal, are not made. In some districts the time of new moon is always selected for these sacrifices, in others this period is not regarded.

II. Should the health of the society be affected in an extraordinary degree, or should its flocks or herds suffer from disease, or from the ravages of wild beasts, public expiations to the Earth God must be performed.

III. The patriarchal office is connected, to a great degree, with religious feeling, and, practically, the fortunes of the Abbaya² are regarded as the chief index of the disposition of the deity towards the portion of society over which he presides. Hence the failure of his crops, the loss of his farm stock, and more especially sickness or death in his household, are regarded as tokens of coming wrath, which cannot be too speedily averted.

All arrangements connected with the ceremony of sacrifice, are conducted by the patriarch in concert with the priest. The divine will is in every case declared by the latter, as it is communicated to him in visions ; and he may demand a victim at any time, even when no visible signs of divine displeasure appear.

The public sacrifices to the Earth God, then, appear to be either Cereal offerings, health offerings, or offerings on account of the patriarchal families.

Private atonements are deemed necessary when any extraordinary calamity marks the anger of the deity towards a particular house, as, for example, when a child watching a flock perishes by a

¹ See the First Georgic, 338–350.

² Patriarch.

tiger, the form which is assumed by the Earth God for purposes of wrath. Then the parents hasten to the priest, conduct him to their dwelling, and dash vessels of cold water over him. When seated in his wet garments, a cup of water is placed before him, into which he dips his fingers thrice, smells them, sneezes, and is filled with the god, and speaks wildly in his name.

“Bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit
Excussisse Deum.”

He of course refers the visitation to the neglected worship of the dread deity, and generally demands an immediate victim. If this requisition cannot be complied with, a goat is led to the place of sacrifice, where its ear is cut off, and cast bleeding upon the earth; a pledge which must be redeemed by human blood, at whatever cost, within the year.

In one district in the Jeypore Zemindary, which I have not visited, blood is drawn from the ear of a child of the afflicted family, who becomes pledged to sacrifice it if a substitute cannot be provided. I have not, however, heard, on good authority, of any instance of the actual immolation of a *Khond* in the districts to which these observations refer, although Khonds have certainly been sacrificed elsewhere.

It thus appears that the number of sacrifices in a *Khond* district depends upon circumstances so variable, that it is scarcely possible to form an estimate in any case of their annual average. In the valley of Borogutza, two miles long, and less than three quarters of a mile in breadth, I found seven victims whose immolation had been prevented by the vicinity of our troops, but was to take place immediately upon my departure.

Victims, in the Orissa language “*Merias*,” in that of the Khonds “*Keddu*,” or “*Tukhi*,” are everywhere procured by the “*Dombango*,” termed “*Panwa*,” or weavers, by the Hindus, a class of inhabitants of the hill country who have peculiar duties in every village. They purchase them without difficulty upon false pretences, or kidnap them, from the poorer classes of Hindus in the low country, either to the order of the abbayas or of the priests, or upon speculation; when in difficulty, they sell their own children for sacrifice. When brought up the mountains, the price of the victims is determined by the demand, a few being always if possible kept in reserve in each district, to meet sudden demands for atonement.

Victims of either sex are equally acceptable to the Earth God: children, whose age precludes a knowledge of their situation, being

for convenience sake preferred. Brahmans who have assumed the Brahmanical thread, (being probably regarded as already consecrated to the deity,) and perhaps Khonds, in some tracts, are held to be unacceptable offerings; but the word of the procurer is the only guarantee of fitness in these respects which is required.

It is a highly characteristic feature of this religion, and pregnant with important consequences, that every victim, with the single exception above noticed, must be bought by the Khonds with a price; an unbought life being an abomination to the deity.

The meria is brought blindfolded to the village by the procurer, and is lodged in the house of the abbaya; in fetters if grown up, at perfect liberty if a child. He is regarded during life as a consecrated being, and if at large is eagerly welcomed at every threshold.

¶ Victims are not unfrequently permitted to attain to years of maturity in ignorance of their situation, although how this ignorance can be maintained it is difficult to understand; and should one under such circumstances have intercourse with the wife or the daughter of a Khond, thankfulness is expressed to the deity for the distinction.

To a meria youth who thus grows up, a wife of one of the castes upon the mountains not of Khond race is generally given. Farm stock and land are presented to him, and should a family be the result, it is held to be born to the fearful condition of the sire. The sacrifice of lives bound to existence by these ties is often foregone, but should the dread divinity require atonements not easy to be afforded, the victim father and all his children are offered up without hesitation. It is a rule, however, that persons who stand in the relation of direct descent, shall not be immolated in the same district; and this is so rigidly observed, that when a victim is thought in any degree to resemble a former mature sacrifice, he is always out of precaution either sold or exchanged: and this is I presume to avoid the risk of sacrificing (according to the ideas of the Khonds noticed above) the same life twice to the divinity.

In the time of Kuli Dora Bissye of Goomsur, uncle of the present Dora Bissye, and one of the class of Benniah Khonds which has generally foregone the practice of this rite, a victim who had been permitted to attain to manhood was led out to sacrifice in the district of Rodungiah. The preliminary ceremonies had been gone through, and an intoxicated crowd expected their consummation, when the fettered youth said to the abbaya, "In suffering this death I become, as it were, a god; and I do not resist my fate: unbind me, and let me partake with you in the joy of the festival." The

abbaya consented, and unbound him; the young man called for a bowl and drank, and the crowd contended fiercely for the remains of the liquor which his lips had consecrated. He then danced and sang amid the throng until the sacrifice could be no longer delayed when he requested the abbaya to lend him his axe and his bow that he might once more join his companions, armed like a free man, in the dance. He received the weapons, and when the abbaya was busied with the priest in preparing for the last rite, the youth approached him in the dance and clove his skull at a blow. He then dashed across the Salki, a deep and foaming torrent, and fled down the Ghaut to the keep of Kuli Bissye. A furious crowd of worshippers followed and demanded his surrender. But the Bissye contrived to cajole them until he could collect a small party of adherents who secretly bore away the fugitive, and his descendants still live.

In like manner, when the arrival of the English troops first spread confusion above the Ghauts in Goomsur, many victims sought and found protection at the hands of the present Dora Bissye.

From these festivals of sacrifice no one is excluded. They are generally attended by a large concourse of people of both sexes, and continue for three days, which are passed in the indulgence of every form of gross excess, in more than Saturnalian licence.

The first day and night are spent exclusively in drunken feasting and obscene riot. Upon the second morning the victim, who has fasted from the preceding evening, is carefully washed, dressed in a new garment, and led forth from the village in solemn procession, with music and dancing

The Meria grove, a clump of deep and shadowy forest trees,—

“*Sylva alta Jovis lucusque Dianæ,*”

in which the mango, the bur, the dammar, and the pipala generally prevail, usually stands at a short distance from the hamlet, by a rivulet which is called the Meria stream. It is kept sacred from the axe, and is avoided by the Khond as haunted ground. My followers were always warned to abstain from seeking shelter within its awful shade. In its centre, upon the second day, an upright stake is fixed, generally between two plants of the Sankissar or Bazardanti shrub. The victim is seated at its foot, bound back to it by the priest. He is then anointed with oil, ghee, and turmeric, and adorned with flowers; and a species of reverence, which it is not easy to distinguish from adoration, is paid to him throughout the day. And there is now infinite contention to obtain the slightest relic of his person; a particle

of the turmeric paste with which he is smeared, or a drop of his spittle, being esteemed, (especially by the women,) of supreme virtue. In some districts, instead of being thus bound in a grove, the victim is exposed in or near the village upon a couch, after being led in procession round the place of sacrifice. And in some parts of Goomsur where this practice prevails, small rude images of beasts and birds in clay are made in great numbers at this festival, and stuck on poles; a practice of the origin or meaning of which I have been able to obtain no satisfactory explanation.

Upon the third morning the victim is refreshed with a little milk and palm sago, while the licentious feast, which has scarcely been intermitted during the night, is loudly renewed. About noon the orgies terminate, and the assemblage issues forth with stunning shouts and pealing music to consummate the sacrifice.

As the victim must not suffer bound, nor on the other hand exhibit any show of resistance, the bones of his arms, and if necessary those of his legs, are now broken in several places.

The acceptable place of sacrifice has been discovered during the previous night, by persons sent out for this purpose into the fields of the village or of the private oblator. The ground is probed in the dark with long sticks, and the first deep chink that is pierced is considered the spot indicated by the Earth God. The rod is left standing in the earth, and in the morning four large posts are set up around it.

The priest, assisted by the abbaya and one or two of the elders of the village, now takes the branch of a green tree, which is cleft to a distance of several feet down the centre. They insert the victim within the rift, fitting it in some districts to his chest, in others to his throat. Cords are then twisted round the open extremity of the stake, which the priest, aided by his assistants, strives with his whole force to close. He then wounds the victim slightly with his axe, when the crowd throws itself upon the sacrifice, and exclaiming, "We bought you with a price, and no sin rests on us!" strips the flesh from the bones¹.

Each man bears his bloody shred to his fields, and thence returns straight home. Next day all that remains of the victim is burnt up with a whole sheep on a funeral pile, and the ashes are scattered over the fields, or laid as paste over the houses and granaries; and for three days after the sacrifice the inhabitants of the village which afforded it remain dumb, communicating with each other by signs, and remaining unvisited by strangers. At the

¹ This is not the only mode in which human life is offered up by the Khonds to their gods.

end of this time a buffalo is slaughtered at the place of sacrifice, when tongues are loosened; but until seven days have elapsed, a person who has been present at a sacrifice cannot approach the villages of a tribe which does not offer human sacrifices.

The Khond population of the region which extends between Goomsur and the Zemindary of Chinna Kimeddy, a tract about sixty miles in length and fifty in breadth, do not offer human victims to the gods.

II. *Bella Pennu, the Sun God, and Danzu Pennu, the Moon God.*

The Sun and the Moon are universally recognised as deities by the Khonds, but no ceremonial worship is addressed to either in the districts to which these observations extend¹. They are acknowledged in these districts by simple invocation upon every occasion of religion and solemnity.

III. *Sandhi Pennu, the God of Limits.*

Adored by human victims on boundaries. Other victims.

It is easy to understand that amongst clusters of jealous tribes which depend entirely upon the soil, a God of Limits should be universally acknowledged. He is apparently to be regarded as a manifestation of the Earth God. He is adored by the same rite as the great divinity; but, besides the blood of human victims, that of buffaloes and of goats is acceptable to him. Particular points upon the boundaries of districts, fixed by ancient usage, and generally upon the highways, are his altars, and these demand each an annual victim, who is either an unsuspecting traveller struck down by his priests, or a meria provided by purchase, as for the Earth God.

On the boundary between Ruttabarri and Ogdur, on the Hattigutzu ghaut, and on that of the same district on the side of Balskupa, this rite is never omitted. Upon the latter, where it is marked by some low barricades, a mile from Surudukupa, I saw the bones of a late victim whitening in the sun. On the ghaut between Kuradicottah and Borogutza, there is a similar place of sacrifice, marked by a turmeric-smearcd stone, which stands beneath a spreading mango tree, and is called "Lakshmi putra" by the trembling Hindu. On the boundary between North Atkombo and Boad is also a well-known place of sacrifice, distinguished by a heap of stones; "Sandhi" is the Khond and Orissan word for "boundary."

¹ I have reason to believe that in some districts the Sun is the chief God.

IV. *Loha Pennu, the God of Arms.*

His symbol. When invoked. Victims.

The God of Arms has in every Khond village, at least in the southern districts, a grove sacred from the axe, in the centre of which, beneath a spreading tree, his symbol is buried, a piece of iron about two cubits in length; and to no Khond god is worship more assiduously or devoutly paid.

When war is resolved upon, the priest, accompanied by a few of the leading elders (while women and children, abhorred by this god, are carefully kept at a distance), enters his grove. He sacrifices a young chicken, letting the blood sink into the earth, and over the symbol he pours out a libation of palm toddy, and then presents an addled egg and some rice, all the while invoking the presence of the deity, saying, "Our youth are going out to fight; go thou out before them!" The priest then divides some rice into a number of small heaps, and offers one to Bera Pennu and one to each of the other deities, whom he thinks proper to propitiate. He then leaves the grove, accompanied, it is believed, by the deity, if propitious. On the outside there await him the whole youth of the tribe completely armed. He heaps their arms with much solemnity in a pile by a stream, and taking a handful of long grass, sprinkles them with water. He then calls loudly upon Loha Pennu, and upon Bera Pennu (if it is not a case of family feud), and on "the war gods of the hills," and on all the other gods. Loha Pennu, if favourable, now possesses the priest, who becomes bacchant, raving wildly with hair cast loose, and shouting in phrenzy, while all shout with him. He then seizes a handful of the arms, points towards the hostile quarter, and delivers them to those nearest, who rush off, followed by the rest as they can snatch weapons from the heap. They make straight for the nearest of their enemy's villages, and attack any of the inhabitants whom they find in the fields, but no one met upon the road; for there, even while a conflict is going on, any one is safe. If they find no one in the fields, they go up to the tree next the village and wound it with an axe. When the people thus attacked take the alarm they shout defiance from every village, and both sides give themselves up to preparations for battle on the morrow. The priest before the battle makes a fresh offering to Loha Pennu on the field, and gives the signal to engage. He himself waits in the rear until some warrior, himself unwounded, can bring the right arm of a slain foe, with which trophy they both rush to the grove of Loha Pennu, where

the priest presents it to the god, with the prayer that he will make the axes of the tribe more sharp, and their arrows more sure.

Success in arms is carefully ascribed in every case to the immediate interposition of Loha Pennu, never to personal valour.

It is in the power of the priest upon any occasion to prevent war by declaring Loha Pennu to be unfavourable.

V. *Jugah Pennu, the God of Small-Pox.*

His offerings.

Jugah Pennu, say the Khonds, "sows small-pox upon mankind as men sow seed upon the earth." When a village is threatened with this dread disease, it is deserted by all, save a few persons who remain to offer the blood of buffaloes, hogs, and sheep, to the destroying power. The inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets attempt to prevent his approach by planting thorns in the paths which lead towards the infected place.

VI. *Nadzu Pennu, the Village God.*

His functions. Victims and priest.

The Nadzu Pennu, or Village God, is the guardian deity of every hamlet. These universal lares are the great objects of the domestic and familiar worship of the Khonds; the ruin or prosperity of villages is in their power; their aid is implored as patrons in every undertaking; vows are made and registered to them in sickness, and the village deity is especially invoked as Lucina. In Orissa and Telingana the rural gods, who bear the same designation, are Hindu gods localized and assumed as patron deities, but the Nadzu Pennu of the Khonds appears to be a local influence quite distinct from the greater divinities.

This god is familiarly approached by all at his shrine, which is simply marked by a stone placed under the cotton-tree planted in the centre of every village on its foundation. Sheep, fowls, and pigs, with grain and fruit, are his offerings. The village abbaya is his priest, but any one may minister for himself at his altar. "Nadzu" is the Khond word for a village.

VII. *Soro Pennu, the Hill God.* VIII. *Jori Pennu, the God of Streams.* IX. *Gossa Pennu, the Forest God.*

Every hill and knoll in the Khond country has a name and a divinity who is called Soro Pennu, but to whom no formal wor-

ship is addressed. Jori Pennu is the God of Streams, but he has, in like manner, no peculiar rites. Gossa Pennu, the Forest God, has a locality within the limits of every village where the following observances are paid to him, at least in the southern districts.

That timber may never be wanting in case of accidents from fire or from enemies, a considerable grove, generally of dammar, is uniformly dedicated by every village to Gossa Pennu, and religiously preserved. It is consecrated by the priest, by drawing a line round it with a bamboo split at one end, and having a fowl, an offering to the god, attached to the other. The bird is then sacrificed, with the usual accompaniments of rice and an addled egg, in the centre of the grove, the names of all the other gods being invoked after that of the sylvan deity. The young trees of this wood are occasionally pruned, but not a twig is cut for use without the formal consent of the village, nor can the axe even then be applied before Gossa Pennu has been propitiated by the sacrifice of a sheep or a hog.

X. *Munda Pennu, the Tank God.*

The Khonds carefully collect for the purpose of irrigation the waters of their rivulets near their sources, by means of rude weak dams, called "Munda," and they assiduously sacrifice sheep and fowls to Munda Pennu, under the nearest tree, praying him to preserve these embankments.

XI. *Sugu Pennu, or Sidruju Pennu, the God of Fountains.*

The Gods of Fountains are amongst the Khonds objects of the most anxious and regular worship. When a spring dries up, the priest is instantly sent for by the despairing villagers, and conjured to bring back the water, with promises of all that they can command. He plucks the cocoon of a silkworm from a bamboo tree, and in the dead of night steals to some living fountain, to endeavour to induce the god to transfer a portion of its waters to the deserted spring; at the imminent risk of his own life, if his errand should become known to the proprietors of the water which is thus to be wiled away.

The kuttagottaru, or priest, remains a long time alone over the spring, muttering incantations, by which he generally prevails with Sugu Pennu. He then fills the cocoon from the spring, and returns to the dry fountain, repeating charms as he goes, while it is

believed that a stream of water follows his footsteps under ground. The abbaya, with a party of old men who have fasted the preceding day (the presence of women being here peculiarly fatal, while that of youths is also interdicted), awaits his return at the deserted well. Its basin is now cleared out and the cocoon-cup of water is placed in it. The priest then sacrifices a sheep or a hog to Sugu Pennu, who either immediately renews the spring, or gives signs of satisfaction which are always followed by its reappearance in a day or two.

XII. *Pidzu Pennu, the God of Rain.*

When there is a failure of the rains, a whole tribe generally meets to invoke Pidzu Pennu. Quarrels are now forgotten or suspended, and all go forth, men, women, and children, accompanied by the loudest music, the men shouting and capering madly in circles. The God of Showers is sought at some old appointed tree or rock. While some keep up the dance without intermission, others strip and cook the victims, which are bullocks, sheep, or hogs, and which are sacrificed with invocations by the kuttagottaru. He first eats with the old men, who have fasted from the preceding day. Then the young men eat: and finally the women and children, who have sat by, receive their share.

XIII. *Pilamu Pennu, the God of Hunting.*

When a hunting party is formed, the Khonds always require the priest to propitiate the God of the Chase. He piles the weapons of the huntsmen by a rivulet, sprinkles water over them with a handful of long grass, and sacrifices a fowl to the god, who, if propitious, enables him to indicate the direction in which the chase is to be pursued, and occasionally to devote so many wild hogs, hares, &c. to fall. A hunting party generally consists of from thirty to fifty persons, who drive and mob the game, killing it with their arrows, slings, and axes. The hot weather is the season for sport. The Khonds, strange to say, are unacquainted with the use of poison for their arrows, although the neighbouring Sourahs have a poison said to be so active as soon to kill a tiger.

XIV. *The God of Births.*

When the birth of a child does not take place at the expected time, the priest is immediately put in requisition, as on every other conceivable occasion of doubt or difficulty amongst the Khonds.

He takes the woman to the place of confluence of two streams, sprinkles water over her, and makes an offering to the deity. When any animal fails in fertility, the same god is appealed to.

THE KHOND LOCAL DIVINITIES.

I. *Deceased Ancestors.*

The worship of deceased ancestors is a striking and important feature of the Khond religion. The more distinguished fathers of the tribe, of its branches, or of its subdivisions, are all remembered by the priests, their sanctity growing with the remoteness of the period of their deaths; and they are invoked in endless array, after the gods who are universally worshipped, at every religious festival.

Distinction is generally achieved amongst the Khonds, either by the conquest of land from the waste, or by success in battle; and deceased ancestors are, in consequence, chiefly invoked to give prosperity to the labours in the field, and victory to the arms of their descendants. But they are propitiated upon every occasion of public worship whatever; and it is said that a perfectly accomplished priest takes between three and four hours to recite his roll of gods and deified men.

II. *Pitabaldi.*

His name. Where worshipped. His shrine. Offerings.

Pitabaldi is a compound Orissan word, signifying "Great Father God." This deity is worshipped in Chokapaud, Hodzoghoro, Ogdur, and Nowsagur; while in the western and southern Khond districts his name is unknown. His symbol is a stone smeared with turmeric, placed under a lofty forest tree, where tradition generally records that a rift once marked his passage into or his emergence from the earth. Pitabaldi has a temple by a grove at Godrisye, between Gattigudu and Boni. It is a shed ten or twelve feet square, with a raised floor. Within is a low vacant mud enclosure two feet in diameter. In front stands a post to which victims are bound for sacrifice.

To Pitabaldi are due two yearly offerings, one at seed time, the other at harvest. They usually consist of a goat or a few fowls, with milk, turmeric, rice, ghee, and incense; and buffaloes are occasionally sacrificed. The blood of the victim is partly spilt on the rice of the offering, partly allowed to sink into the soil, where the rift is supposed to have existed.

III. *Bandri Pennu.*

His Shrines. Appeared in a material form at Boropall. Effects of his removal.

Bandri Pennu enjoys great influence in the district of Nowsagur in the zemindary of Daspallah, where he is manifested in a material form, and has a temple. In Borogutza he has also a shrine, which is kept by Pedda Dehri, the patriarch of the subdivision, and which is exactly similar in form to that of Pitabaldi in Godrisye. Of this deity, the present Magi, the Patriarch of Nowsagur, states that he manifested himself at Boropall, in the form under which he is now adored there, some years ago, upon the occasion of his (the Magi's) marriage.

The god was found in the large dish of rice which, according to custom, his wife's mother at that ceremony placed upon his head. Its material I was assured is neither gold, silver, wood, iron, stone, nor any other known substance. It is deposited in a small building under the guardianship of a Hindu priest, who is entertained for this service, and who at the time of my visit was unfortunately absent at some distance with the key.

The Raja of Daspallah a few years ago carried away this sacred symbol by force, when the village of Boropall was nearly depopulated by disease and tigers. The deity was afterwards restored, and these plagues ceased. Bandri Pennu and Pitabaldi are worshipped with similar rites.

IV. *Bahman Pennu.* V. *Bahmundi Pennu.*

Bahman Pennu, apparently the Brahman god, and Bahmundi Pennu, of suspicious similarity in point of sound, are honoured with rites similar to those paid to Pitabaldi in the districts to the eastward of the great table land, where the Khonds have perhaps been most exposed to impressions from Hinduism. Bahmundi Pennu is also worshipped in Tenteliaghor. It may be observed that local tradition speaks of the existence of a Hindu city founded by Rama (on his return from Ceylon) in Chokapand, where these deities are chiefly adored. My time unfortunately did not admit of my examining the remains of one or two Hindu temples which exist there.

VI. *Dhungarri Pennu.*

His Worship.

This deity is worshipped only in the districts of Hodzoghoro and Tenteliaghor. In him the Khonds appear to adore an influ-

ence which is new to ceremonial worship, namely, the conservative principle, or rather that of things as they were.

Upon a lofty mountain, the fitting altar of Dhungarri, the blood of victims is annually poured out before an immense concourse of devotees, whose single aspiration is, "May we ever live as did our forefathers, and may our children hereafter live like us!"

The greater part of the population whose predominant sentiment is thus expressed, appeared to me under circumstances peculiarly unfavourable to minute inquiry upon any subject.

The mowi tree had just blossomed, and in the drunken festival with which its flowers are welcomed, I beheld the dreadful spectacle of the male population of an entire community, amongst which my route lay for two days, deprived of reason. But no woman added degradation to the scene.

To Dhungarri are sacrificed buffaloes, goats, and pigs.

VII. *Singa Pennu.*

Singa Pennu manifested at Ogdur. Stolen. His Nature.

The god *Singa Pennu*, according to the chief of Ogdur, in which district alone he is worshipped, rose from the earth in the form of a piece of iron, which was called "*Homa Pennu*," (the word "*Homa*" having no meaning in the Khond language,) until the deity revealed his true name, "*Singa*," (which is equally without meaning,) to his priest in a dream. The late Raja Jugraj of Boad adorned the sacred symbol with a silver top, when it was stolen by an impious Khond. The thief perished miserably, with a smith, his accomplice, who attempted to convert the deity into an axe. The mother of the former replaced the sacred iron, when a temple was for safety built over it.

The habits of this god are destructive. The tree under which he is placed certainly dies. If he is laid in water, it dries up. His priest cannot expect to survive in his service the term of four years, while he cannot decline the fearful office.

Thus it appears, that of the four rude temples which are found in these districts, that of *Bandri Pennu* at Boropall and that of *Singa Pennu*, have been recently constructed for the safe custody of symbols which had been previously abstracted by force or stealth. A third, which is vacant, stands in Borogutza in honour of the god, while the fourth, in Chokapaud, is devoted to *Pita-baldi*, whose worship is almost exclusively in Hindu hands. No other Khond temples, I believe, exist in Goomsur, Boad, or Das-pallah.

The Khonds appear to be as far removed from the ideas which give rise to temples and to idol worship, from the idea of confining or of personifying the divine presence, as were the Persian priests who incited Xerxes to burn the temples of the Greeks, on the ground of their being inconsistent with the very nature of God¹.

A moss-grown rock on the hill of Koladah in Goomsur, which bore a rude natural resemblance to a man seated on a tiger, had been from the remotest antiquity an object of superstitious veneration. The father of the late Raja of Goomsur, in compliment to the Jakso tribe, whose former territory included Koladah, built a temple near the spot, and placed within it the image of a man and tiger of the best Hindu workmanship. The gaudy idol remained entirely unnoticed, while the Khonds continued to regard the rude natural image with unabated reverence. In the year 1815, however, when a British force took possession of Koladah, a party of Sepoys chanced to bivouack in the temple. Their camp fire was allowed to scorch the idol, and a Mussulman contemptuously pricked the nose of the tiger with his bayonet. Blood, say the Khonds, flowed from the wound, and a pestilence wasted the English camp, which proved that their divinity had transferred his presence from his ancient hill to the new Hindu shrine. Thither they declined to follow him, but the tiger rock has since ceased to be in any degree an object of religious regard².

VIII. *Dommosinghani*. IX. *Potterghor*. X. *Pinjai*.
XI. *Kankali*. XII. *Bulinda Silenda*.

Dommosinghani, tutelary god of *Dommosinghi*. *Potterghor* and *Pinjai*, names of places. *Bulinda Silenda* and *Kankali*, unknown.

Dommosinghani is simply the tutelary god of the district of *Dommosinghi*, and no doubt represents, in accordance with all analogy, a vague sense of the dependence of the community upon the divine power. The abbayas are his priests.

Potterghor and *Pinjai* are names of places (I believe of ghauts) in the tracts in which the deities so designated are recognised.

¹ There is reason to believe that the Romans, during the first 170 years after the foundation of their city, had no images of their gods. See Arnold's *History of Rome*, vol. i., p. 58.

² There is a rock in Nepaul which is considered to be a god, and a British officer threw the people into the greatest excitement by inadvertently breaking off the nose of the deity as a geological specimen.

Bulinda Silenda and Kunkali are local gods of the district of Punchora, with respect to whom I possess no exact information.

The Hindu Goddess Kali.

The Khonds have adopted, in addition to their native gods, the Goddess Kali, the chief deity of the Hindus in this quarter of Orissa, and whom all the Zemindars recently adored, and in many cases no doubt still adore, by the rite of human sacrifice. Her worship is everywhere postponed by the Khonds to that of their principal native divinities, except perhaps at Ranigunje in Atkombo, where the head of the priestly branch of the chief Khouro family is her minister, and where her service is apparently combined with that of the Earth God, the offerings thus acquiring a double significance. Kali is principally recognised under these three names. Bhadravallu, Bhairavi and Komeswari. Her ordinary offerings buffaloes, goats, and fowls.

Such are the Khond divinities and their worship in a part of Boad and of Goomsur. I proceed to speak of the institution of priesthood,

SECTION II.

THE KHOND PRIESTHOOD.

Origin. Of two classes.—1. The Khond priesthood. Appellations. In what respect distinguished from the community. Magical arts. Equality. Emoluments.—2. Hindu priests.

The Khond priesthood, like every other priesthood, lays claim to divine institution. Each deity originally appointed ministers in every tribe by which he was recognised, and the office is hereditary, descending usually, but not necessarily, to eldest sons. But no exclusive privilege is transmitted by descent; the priestly office may be assumed by any one who chooses to assert a call to the service of a god, the mandate being communicated in a dream or vision, and the ministry of any divinity may apparently be laid aside at pleasure. Hence the Khond priesthood has no tendency to form a caste.

In addition to the native priesthood, a class of Hindus, whose number is not considerable, is employed by the Khonds in the service of their gods. The Khond priesthood conducts exclusively the worship of the Earth God, and generally that of the deities who

are universally acknowledged, while it divides with the Hindu ministers the service of the local gods and of Kali, and apparently according to no fixed rules.

In Goomsur and the northern parts of Boad, the Khond name for a priest is "Kuttagottaru" or "Torambu;" in the western districts it is "Jakoro." The Orissan appellations of "Janni" and "Dehri" are however occasionally adopted, the former generally by the priests of the Earth God, the latter by those of the local deities and of Kali.

Every Khond village has its priest. The Khond priest is separated from the rest of the community only in these respects:—1st. He may not eat with laymen nor partake of food prepared by their hands. This rule does not however extend to the liquor cup, of which he partakes freely at feasts, while a portion of uncooked flesh is reserved for him. His family does not share in this restriction.

2ndly. The priest in no case bears arms. When war is undertaken with enemies of a different race, he first invokes the Earth God as above stated, and then Loha Pennu. When the contest is between Khond tribes, he makes an offering to the latter deity alone, in the space which divides the combatants: and on the completion of the rite, flourishes his axe twice in the air, utters shouts of defiance, and retires while the conflict is joined.

The Khonds, like all other people at the same stage of advancement, believe in charms and incantations, but their superstition is very slightly connected with medicine. One of the chief duties of a priest, however, is to discover the causes of sickness, as of every other species of misfortune, either in the immediate displeasure of some deity, or of some ancestor ungratified by food and honours, or in the magical arts of an enemy.

Upon such occasions the Kuttagottaru seats himself by the afflicted person, and taking some rice divides it into small heaps, each dedicated to a god, or to a deceased ancestor whom he names. He then balances a sickle with a thread, places a few grains upon each end, and calls all the gods by name. The sickle is slightly agitated; a god has come and perched by the offering; the priest declares his name, and lays down the sickle; he then counts the heap of rice dedicated to that god; if odd in number the deity is offended, if even he is pleased. In the former case the priest becomes full of the god, shakes his head frantically with dishevelled hair, and utters wild incoherent sentences. The patient addresses the god in his minister, inquiring humbly the cause of

his displeasure. The minister refers to the god's neglected worship;—sorrow is professed on the other hand, and forgiveness prayed; and the sacrifices prescribed by the priest are instantly performed. Deceased ancestors are invoked as gods, and are appeased by offerings of fowls, rice, and liquor. The consecrated rice with the brass vessels used in these ceremonies, are the perquisite of the priest.

The presence of the Khond priest at the marriage feast, as noticed in the preceding section, seems to be chiefly for the prevention of injury to the parties by the magical arts of ill-wishers. His office on the occasions of the birth, or the naming of a child, is to decide which ancestor of the family is born again. He is a guest at funeral feasts, as at all other domestic ceremonies.

The members of the priesthood, in accordance with the general spirit of Khond society, are perfectly equal in point of rank, although some degree of traditional precedence is necessarily enjoyed by the older priestly families. They have neither privileges nor endowments in any form. Their land is not tilled by the common labour, as is the custom among the neighbouring Sourahs. They have an honourable place at all public and private festivals, and receive, as above observed, perquisites of some value at certain ceremonies, and also occasional harvest offerings of good-will, when the deity to whom they minister has proved propitious.

The Hindu priesthood employed by the Khonds is composed partly of the class of hereditary civil officers, the Bissyes, Mahalikos, Dalbehras, &c., partly of other employés, who are usually of Sudra caste. In Chokapaud, Hodzoghoro, and Tenteliaghor, the former minister to Pitabaldi. In Nowsagur some of the latter are entertained for the service of Bandri Pennu. Hindus generally perform the worship of Kuli, although a Khond Dehri discharges her rites under the name of Bhadrawallu, at Ranigunje of Atkombo; and in the western districts Khond priests frequently minister to her as Komeswari. These Sudra priests are generally supported, as at Boropall in Nowsagur, by allotments of land. It is curious to mark in every collection, as in this instance, of a few priests maintained by a grant of the soil for the stated ministration of a temple, the germ of an endowed ecclesiastical corporation. Of the degree of influence enjoyed by the Khond priesthood, I shall afterwards speak.

SECTION III.

OF THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE RELIGION OF THE KHONDS
EXERTS UPON SOCIETY.

Such appear to be the leading ideas and the priestly institutions of the Khond superstition.

It is doubtful whether it may be most correctly designated, in general terms, a vague confused theism with a subordinate demonology, or a demonology in which the idea of a supreme power is distinctly to be traced.

This rude faith bears reference to morality only upon a single point, that of the observance of truth; and the Khonds are, I believe, inferior in veracity to no people in the world. The violation of an oath is believed to be invariably punished by the divine wrath; although their ideas respecting these sanctions are not free from casuistry. I saw a tribe of a district of which one half of the population had perished a few years before by small-pox; and the misfortune was entirely attributed to its infraction of an ancient compact confirmed by an oath with a neighbouring Zemindar. When the visitation ceased, the oath was humbly and solemnly renewed. It is in all cases imperative to tell the truth, except when deception is necessary to save the life of a guest, which is sacred, and is to be thought of before the life even of a child of his protector.

The denial of a debt is a breach of this principle which is held to be highly sinful. "Let a man," say the Khonds, "give up all he has to his creditor, and beg a sheep to begin the world with; and by the favor of the gods he shall prosper. Let him have flocks and herds, and deny a just debt, and not a single sheep shall remain to him." The denial of a gift, or of any onerous engagement whatever, is equally offensive to the gods: and is, I believe, a very rare occurrence amongst the Khonds.

But the first duty which the gods have imposed upon man, say this people, is that of hospitality. Persons guilty of the neglect of established observances are punished by the divine wrath, either during their current lives, or when they afterwards return to animate other bodies; and the penalties are death, poverty, disease, the loss of children, and every other form of calamity.

The Khond religion presents no view relative to the future destiny of man, except that he has an imperishable spirit, which

animates an endless succession of human forms, and generally in the order of direct descent. It is held generally, that a man has three lives or spirits: first, an animal life, subject to death; secondly, a life which survives the death of the body, and animates an endless succession of corporeal forms; and, thirdly, a spirit which is identified in its nature with the Deity, possesses power over the affairs of men, and is worshipped as a god.

All the Khonds hold, I believe, the very peculiar doctrine, that death is not the necessary and appointed lot of man, but that it is incurred only as a special penalty for offences against the gods; and this, either through ordinary means,—as by a wound received in battle,—or through the agency of men who are gifted by the gods with power to destroy, as by transforming themselves into wild beasts; or by magicians, who have acquired the power to destroy life by impious arts, purely human.

The Khond divinities are all confined to the limits of the earth. Within it they are believed to reside, emerging and retiring at will by chinks which are occasionally discovered to their worshippers, and they all assume earthly forms at pleasure; the Earth God, for example, adopting that of the tiger as emblematic of his nature, or as convenient for purposes of wrath.

The priesthood of the chief god is composed, as has been already mentioned, exclusively of Khonds; that of the lesser divinities of both Khonds and Hindus.

The point of development which this superstition has attained, appears to be nearly that which is ascribed to the religion of Greece in the Pelasgic period, and not remote from that which is attributed to the superstition of ancient Germany.

In terms of the former mythology it is the reign of *Cœlus* and of *Terra*, of night and the starry signs, the *genii* and the nymphs, and the “gods now forgotten” of *Hesiod*; before the dynasties of *Olympus*, to which later speculations assigned a cosmological character; before *Homer* and the bards conferred unity and nationality upon the perplexed mythical circles of Greece; when the primary deities were honoured in the forms of nature over which they presided, and the lesser and the derived gods were symbolically adored in blocks of wood and stone, as were the Goddess of Fertility at *Paphos*, and the *Graces* at *Orchomenos*.

If this superstition neither tends to raise the minds of its professors above the earth, nor imposes upon them any duties towards their kind, it acts, like all systems of religious belief bearing the same general character, as a strong and fruitful principle of asso-

ciation. Participation in the public worship and contribution to the charges of its ceremonial, are, as has been observed, the first conditions of association in a tribe, applicable even to strangers of a different race and faith. And the bond of a common altar and a distinctive worship is seen to survive the blended ties which arise from community of institutions, of manners, of traditions, and of language.

Many families who, living insulated in the wilder tracts of the Zemindaries, or mingling in close intercourse with the Hindu population, have lost most of their distinctive ideas, habits, and sentiments, and wholly or in part their ancient tongue, remain firmly bound to their race by the tie of religious sympathy. They visit the mountain districts periodically to participate in the great rite; while, on the other hand, the hill tribes, who have maintained their usages pure, endeavour, by conveying a share of the victims to the fields of important individuals or families (as in the case of Dora Bissye) who may incline to exchange their ancestral faith for that of the more civilized people, to make them involuntary partakers in the sacrifices, and to retain them within the ancient bond of social communion.

The festival of the Earth God, in fact, tends to maintain a sense of unity betwixt the Khond tribes, analogous to that which the sacred games at Elis produced amongst the various and minutely divided population of ancient Greece.

The practice of human sacrifice does not appear to exert upon the character of this rude people an influence so eminently unfavourable to humanity as it has done in the case of some other races of mankind.

This may be at least partially accounted for where the victims have been prisoners of war. When the Mexicans loaded the altar of their horrid deity with slaughtered captives, or when the admiral of the fleet of Xerxes sacrificed upon his prow the commander of the first galley which was taken at Salamis, the indulgence of an inhuman passion at war with the first principles of society was sanctioned by association with the worship of the deity.

Amongst the Khonds, on the other hand, the sacrifice of human life is combined with the gratification of no anti-social or ferocious passion, although it is accompanied by indulgence in the worst forms of sensual excess.

The rite is discharged with feelings almost purely religious, in fearful obedience to the express mandate of the terrible power whose wrath it is believed to place in abeyance. And the offerings

are lives free, unforfeited, undegraded, generally in innocent childhood, belonging to a different race from the immolators, procured by persons of another faith, and acquired by scrupulous purchase, which the Khonds believe to confer a perfect title. They are obtained and offered up without passion. When the axes of the crowd are raised to complete the rite, the justificatory exclamation is upon their lips, "We bought you with a price!"

The Khond priesthood being separated in no respect from the community, being dispersed everywhere throughout it, and participating upon equal grounds in all its interests and engagements, is obviously in a highly favourable situation for the acquisition of power; and its influence as a body of interpreters of the will of the deity, of mediators betwixt him and man, and of adepts in magical arts, is, generally speaking, great.

The civil and the religious heads of tribes, although some districts are vexed by their rivalry, generally act in concert; for while the former desire to strengthen their hands as temporal rulers by the aid of superstition, the latter aim at influence through alliance with the secular authority.

When the place of an abbaya, whose race has become extinct, is to be supplied by popular election, the community is almost uniformly guided in its choice by the kuttagottaru, who does not omit upon such occasions to consult with vigils and fasting the will of the deity. And when in the public council a priest of venerable age and character demands, "Will men not listen to those to whom God listens?" the appeal is rarely resisted.
